

Reviews

Vladimír Krivý, (ed.): Slovak elections in 2012

Institute for Sociology of the Slovak Academy of Sciences, Bratislava 2012, 238 p. ISBN: 978-80-85544-76-3

Early parliamentary elections took place in Slovakia in the first half of the 2012, which closed the short government under Iveta Radičová, the unsuccessful presidential candidate from 2009. Similarly to 2010, the elections resulted in the victory of the SMĚR – SD party. This time, however, the results were so obvious, that it was not necessary for the party to look for any coalition partners to assume the executive power. Team of authors led by Vladimír Krivý as the editor have picked up on the tradition of reflections on elections, this time in the Slovak political scene, in the book published by the Institute for Sociology and not by the Institute for Public Affairs as was the case in the previous years. Book focuses on describing and analysing early elections in Slovakia. It is divided into four large chapters supplemented by a preface and a short description of the team of authors.

The first chapter by *Grigorij Mesežnikov* has focused on the development of party politics and circumstances preceding the early elections. This chapter will be appreciated particularly by the readers, who do not remember precisely the circumstances leading to the formation of the coalition government in 2010, relationships among the individual political parties and the key conflict issues in the Slovak political scene. Worth mentioning above all is the detailed description of events at the turn of the 2011 and 2012, the formation of new tickets and the overview of the programming and ideological focus of parties before the elections. In addition, author analyses the financing of the election campaigns and their efficiency. Considering the content and extent of the chapter, it might have been more appropriate to have divided it into several shorter and thematically more closed units. Besides this rather formal imperfection, chapter also suffers from inconsistent work with sources. The text is abundant in specific information and assertions without providing the necessary bibliography. The term “political democracy” (p. 15) is also very interesting and worthy of a more detailed explication.

Interesting is the following second chapter written by the editor himself. It is based on quantitative data and deals with the spatial variability of election results. Apart from the standard analysis of the varying electoral support of the political parties and voter turnout on the level of counties and districts, reader can come across detailed data aggregated on the level of municipalities. What can be considered beneficial is the closer look on the election results and their interpretation through the so-called East Slovak route and categorization of

districts based on election results into individual clusters. Very interesting from qualitative perspective on the dependence of the decision-making in the elections is the comparison of modernising tendencies in the Slovak society, particularly the decreasing illiteracy, emigration, divorce rate, and number of doctors in the first half of the preceding century with the electoral support of political parties.

The third chapter written by three authors – *Zora Bútorová*, *Ol'ga Gyarfášová* and *Martin Slosiarik* focuses primarily on the issue of public opinion. It strives to interpret the behaviour of voters based on exit poll data and other quantitative investigations covering more than a decade of the development of the Slovak political system. Here again the reader can find an analysis of the situation preceding the elections, which as a result leads to some parts of this chapter overlapping the first chapter. In addition, the results of the elections have been repeatedly included, in spite of the fact that the previous chapter has already analysed them. However, the analysis focusing on the shifts of support in the period between the elections among the stable and unstable voters that the political parties in Slovakia have to face is precisely the topic to be dealing with in this chapter. The analysis of social and demographic profile of voters and a value map is also not missing. These supplement information on the elections from the previous chapters. In addition, the chapter outlines the development and expectations of the society approximately three months after the elections in comparison with the years 2010 and 2006. Thus, the text gains on value and reader finds further information, which add to the context of early elections and their results. The added value of this chapter lies primarily in analysing how party representatives perceive their political parties. However, there are also some minor content-related inaccuracies such as unfortunately in professional literature very often occurring percentages mistaken for percentage points. Like in the first chapter, there are some conclusions, which might have been founded or cited (such as on p. 158 “only those remained with liberals, who refused the Euro bailout fund). In addition, the stylistic value of a professional text is diminished by the use of journalismisms.

The last chapter by *Miloslav Bahna* and *Juraj Majo* is an important part of the book. It focuses on an otherwise neglected issue of election behaviour and the division of election gains in the biggest urban zone in Slovakia. Authors have analysed the elections in the entire urban zone through the smallest possible aggregated unit – electoral ward – and analyse the limits and reserves of this approach. The chapter brings a unique and a very interesting perspective on the town, which has so far been analysed as a single unit or four administrative units at the most.

The overall impression of the book is that the collective of authors have met the challenge of analysing the circumstances related to early election in

Slovakia in 2012. In spite of the above-mentioned reservations, the text is abundant in relevant data enriching the current state of research. Arguments are supported by a number of tables and graphs based on primary data in a form of election results as such and sampling investigation. Therefore, I believe that the authors will continue in their work with another book, which will intensify the trend analysis of electoral behaviour in the Slovak society. Certainly, the next possibility is the super-election year 2014!

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